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HEADLINE: Mock Trial Debates Lee Harvey Oswald Case

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BODY:

Cool killer or patsy? After nearly 30 years, Lee Harvey Oswald is getting the trial he never had.

"He was a disturbed man, a fanatic about guns," prosecution attorney Joseph W. Cotchett told the jury Monday in opening statements of the mock trial being staged by the American Bar Association.

Oswald, a former U.S. Marine who lived in the Soviet Union for a time, was determined by the Warren Commission to have been the sole assassin in the Nov. 22, 1963, sniper attack on President Kennedy in Dallas.

Oswald was slain soon after his arrest. Many books and the movie "JFK" have questioned whether he was set up to take the blame by high-level conspirators, with speculation ranging from the CIA to the Mafia.

"Defending Lee Harvey Oswald is difficult because he is not here," defense attorney Thomas Barr said.

"You would believe that the government, by this time 30 years later, would have all the facts," he added. "There should not be the slightest doubt of any kind of what the facts are ... and yet every single fact of importance in this case is open to serious doubt."

"We believe those doubts are such that in this case, where the government has the burden of proof ... it cannot carry the burden," Barr said.

The defense will question the claim that Oswald was the lone gunman. The number of shots fired is uncertain and evidence is said to indicate shots were fired from the "grassy knoll" across from Oswald's alleged firing spot.

In the prosecution's opening argument, a computer-enhanced videotape showed the route of Kennedy's motorcade and the view from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository, from where Oswald allegedly fired three shots.

Cotchett also mentioned Oswald's residency in Russia and his fixation with

Communism.

Actors portraying Marina Oswald, his Russian wife, and a host of ballistics experts and witnesses are to take the stand Tuesday. There was no script for the trial. A decision is expected late Tuesday.

To keep spectators interested, juror and lawyers used handheld devices to monitor their reactions to evidence and testimony.

Jurors reacted roughly equally to the prosecution and defense, finding them on average just over the halfway mark on a scale of 1-to-10, with 1 meaning a statement was unconvincing and 10 meaning it was very convincing.

Prosecutors also hoped that enhanced inspection of the home movie shot by Abraham Zapruder as Kennedy was shot will definitively show that then-Texas Gov. John Connally was wounded by the same bullet that passed through Kennedy's neck. The technical evidence was developed by Failure Analysis Inc. of Menlo Park, Calif., a company that investigates and analyzes disasters.

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